

OECOLOGY

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inches of water for seventeen days, apart from having to cross numerous deep depressions. In some parts of Lou and Eastern Jikany, particularly in Gaajak, people build in open thornwood forest, but generally Nuer prefer to make their villages in open country, even where there is forest near-by, because their cattle are better protected from wild beasts, insect pests, and damp, and also, apparently, because millet does not do so well in wooded country. Building in the open seems also to give freedom from termites. 361
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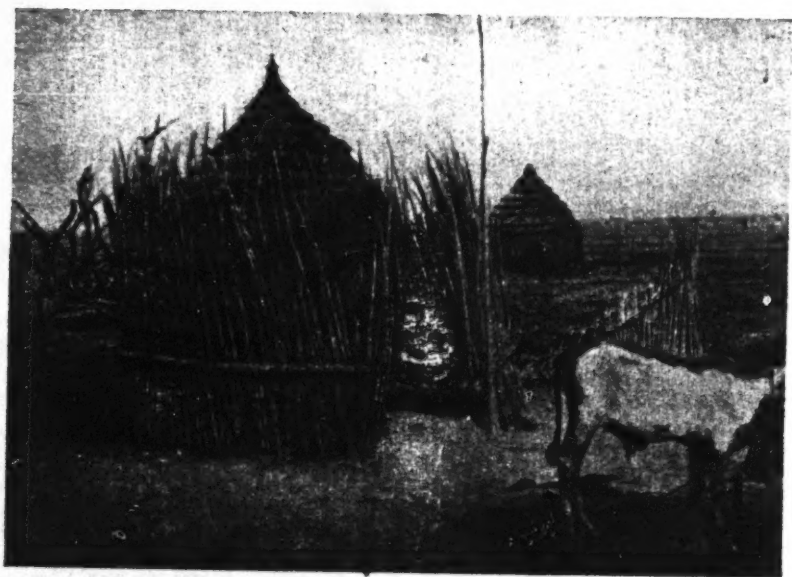
A Nuer homestead consists of a cattle byre and huts. Their byres are of size and workmanship that have evoked the admiration of all travellers. Their form, and the appearance of huts, may be seen in several plates, and their mode of construction is excellently portrayed in Mr. Corfield's photograph (Plate XVIII). It is only necessary to explain that the roofs are supported by trunks of trees erected inside the barns. Both byres and huts are of wattle and daub, though in Western Nuerland, where there is less forest, bundles of millet stalks are employed as rafters. Building and repairs generally take place early in the dry season when there is plenty of straw for thatching and enough millet to provide beer for those who assist in the work. During the rains fences are erected from the byres along two sides of the kraal and around huts to control the movements of cattle and to prevent them messing the homesteads and damaging the crops (Plate XVII). Grazing and the use of grass, trees, &c., is the common right of all members of a village community. 343
342
351
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Families often change their place of residence from one part of a village to another and from village to village, and, in the case of small villages, if there have been many deaths, the cattle are poorly, there have been fights within the village, or pastures and cultivations are exhausted, the whole village community may move to a new site. After about ten years both pastures and gardens show evident signs of exhaustion on the smaller ridges, and huts and byres need rebuilding after some five years. 361

In dry-season camps men sleep in windscreens and women in beehive-huts, or both sexes in beehive-huts. These flimsy shelters are erected a few yards from water, generally in a semi-circle or in lines with their backs to the prevailing wind, and 342
513

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE XV



a. Windscreen (Lou)



b. A well in the bed of the Nyanding (Lou)
[Face p. 134]

Chapter Three

FAMILY LIFE IN NUERLAND

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE Nuer does not live to himself. He is a part of his particular village, and his actions affect all his relatives, no matter how distant the relationship may be. This fact checks him to some extent in his misdeeds, for any infringement of Nuer law not only affects him but all his people as well. He must give heed to them and to Nuer law in general if he is to count on their support and aid in time of need (Fig. 7). 626

The men and boys of the village usually sleep in the barn which is to be found in most villages. A house is set aside for the sleeping quarters of the girls. The women and little children sleep in the houses. 513

The Nuer house is conical in shape. It has mud walls up to about three feet or more from the ground, then the sloping grass roof. There are no windows. A door, woven like a mat, is made of grass. If the weather is cool, a fire is made inside the house and the smoke goes out through the roof. At night the door is tightly closed in order to keep wild animals out, so the ventilation is indeed poor. 342

A fence of cane-stalks is made and encloses a small yard. The door of this fence as well as the door of the house are made low so that one must stoop in order to get in. 351

The yard is swept clean—a bunch of grass tightly tied together at one end suffices for a broom. One part of the enclosure is plastered with mud for a radius of two or three feet, and in the centre is a hole, also plastered, in which the women may be found pounding the dura, making use of a long pole. The dura is pounded very fine, the coarser parts being sifted out by shaking it on a grass 252